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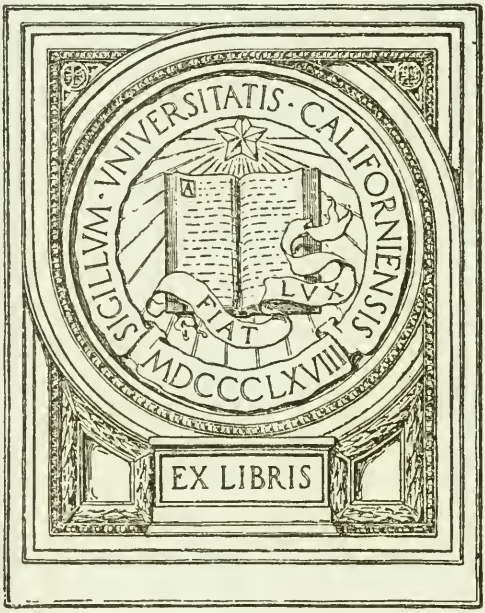

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MASTERPIECES
IN COLOUR
EDITED BY
T. LEMAN HARE

VAN DYCK

1599—1641

5132 5

"Masterpieces in Colour" Series

Artist.	Author.
BELLINI.	George Hay.
BOTTICELLI.	Henry B. Binns.
BOUCHER.	C. Haldane MacFall.
BURNE-JONES.	A. Lys Baldry.
CARLO DOLCI.	George Hay.
CHARDIN.	Paul G. Konody.
CONSTABLE.	C. Lewis Hind.
COROT.	Sidney Allnutt.
DA VINCI.	M. W. Brockwell.
DELACROIX.	Paul G. Konody.
DÜRER.	H. E. A. Furst.
FRA ANGELICO.	James Mason.
FRA FILIPPO LIPPI.	Paul G. Konody.
FRAGONARD.	C. Haldane MacFall.
FRANZ HALS.	Edgcumbe Staley.
GAINSBOROUGH	Max Rothschild.
GREUZE.	Alys Eyre Macklin.
HOGARTH.	C. Lewis Hind.
HOLBEIN.	S. L. Bensusan.
HOLMAN HUNT.	Mary E. Coleridge.
INGRES.	A. J. Finberg.
LAWRENCE.	S. L. Bensusan.
LE BRUN, VIGÉE.	C. Haldane MacFall
LEIGHTON.	A. Lys Baldry.
LUINI.	James Mason.
MANTEGNA.	Mrs. Arthur Bell.
MEMLINC.	W. H. J. & J. C. Weale.
MILLAIS.	A. Lys Baldry.
MILLET.	Percy M. Turner.
MURILLO.	S. L. Bensusan.
PERUGINO.	Selwyn Brinton.
RAEBURN.	James L. Caw.
RAPHAEL.	Paul G. Konody.
REMBRANDT.	Josef Israels.
REYNOLDS.	S. L. Bensusan.
ROMNEY.	C. Lewis Hind.
ROSSETTI	Lucien Pissarro.
RUBENS.	S. L. Bensusan.
SARGENT.	T. Martin Wood.
TINTORETTO	S. L. Bensusan.
TITIAN.	S. L. Bensusan.
TURNER.	C. Lewis Hind.
VAN DYCK.	Percy M. Turner.
VELAZQUEZ.	S. L. Bensusan.
WATTEAU.	C. Lewis Hind.
WATTS.	W. Loftus Hare.
WHISTLER.	T. Martin Wood

Others in Preparation.

PLATE I.—CHARLES I. Frontispiece

(In the Louvre)

Certainly the finest portrait of Charles I. in existence. It shows Van Dyck in his most attractive aspect as a painter of the aristocracy. Executed before the marked decline in his technical powers, which marred, from an artistic standpoint, the later pictures of his English period, it yet possesses the dignity and distinction he knew so well how to infuse in portraying the nobility of our country. It is one of the best examples of the artist's powers as a colourist, and as such will bear comparison with the productions of the mighty Venetians.

Van Dyck

BY PERCY M. TURNER

ILLUSTRATED WITH EIGHT REPRODUCTIONS IN COLOUR

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I

THE EARLY DAYS

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NO painter has remained more consistently in favour with both artists and the public than Van Dyck. His art marks the highest achievement of Flanders of the seventeenth century. In making this statement the claims of Rubens have not

been overlooked, although the latter has been, and probably will always be, considered the head of the Flemish school.

It is perhaps not too much to say that Van Dyck possessed in a greater measure than Rubens those qualities which go to make a great artist. We can never overlook the seniority of the latter, and to him will always belong the credit of having evolved the style which revolutionised the art of a nation, and there is no doubt that the pupil owed to him much of the knowledge he so well utilised in after-life.

In comparing those two great men it would be well, at first, to rid ourselves of the confusion which often arises through the application of the terms "artist" and "painter." In relation to painting they are only too often considered synonymous, but a little consideration will show us that a man whose technical abilities are of a high order need not necessarily be a great artist. In fact, one of the most truthful charges

PLATE II.—CHARLES LOUIS OF BAVARIA AND HIS BROTHER ROBERT, AFTERWARDS DUKE OF CUMBERLAND

(In the Louvre)

As an example of direct portraiture this picture would be hard to beat. It shows Van Dyck in one of his happiest moods dealing with a subject which peculiarly appealed to him.

urged against the best contemporary art is that it demonstrates an astonishing poverty of invention, a lack of message, if you will, coupled with an extraordinarily highly developed technique. To screen as much as possible the dilemma in which he finds himself, many a modern painter has recourse to creating those outbursts of meaningless eccentricity that are so familiar upon the walls of our exhibitions. It is true that some few of the men who are living to-day are equipped almost, if not quite, as well technically as the great majority of the old masters. In a word, they could meet them on nearly equal terms as painters, but they lack invention and conception in which to bring their powers into legitimate play, and consequently they cannot rank with them as artists.

It was in the possession of these very qualities that Van Dyck surpassed Rubens. I do not suggest that the latter was devoid of power of conception, for, if I did, would not the great "Coup-de-lance" at Antwerp, or the

"Fall of the Damned" at Munich (the drawing for the latter in the National Gallery gives an even better idea than the finished picture) be there to refute me? Van Dyck, however, though being quite the match of Rubens in technique, even in his early days—though still working under him—surpassed him in his middle period. Anybody who has closely studied the noble religious pictures at Courtrai and Malines—the latter, unfortunately, irreparably injured by damp and neglect—can but be impressed with his stupendous power in this direction. Granted that he does not appeal in the same measure to our emotions from the spiritual side as do the early painters of Italy and Flanders, he yet brings the brutal aspect of the scene before us in an intensely human manner.

In most subject pictures Van Dyck painted before his visit to Italy it is apparent that Rubens had been his sole guide, and he was impelled only with a desire to emulate his master. But, after his return, the influence of the mighty painters he had studied south

of the Alps had wrought a wondrous change in his method, and although he found himself back again amidst his old surroundings he never quite forsook the path he had been treading in the interval. Rubens, who had also spent some years in Italy, did not submit to the influence of the southern masters in the same measure, but remained a Fleming to the end. There is little alteration to be observed, either in his historical and sacred pictures or in his portraits, after he had studied the Italians. From this we may assume either that Rubens was less susceptible to extraneous influences, or that he considered his method quite the equal to any that he had seen. Van Dyck, on the other hand, absorbed, particularly from the Venetians, certain qualities which he employed ceaselessly throughout the remainder of his life. It was not, however, solely this cause which raised Van Dyck as an artist above his master. Rather was it to be attributed to the superiority of temperament. Thus, whilst we can still consider

Rubens the head of the Flemish school of the seventeenth century, we should accord to Van Dyck the foremost rank as an artist.

Anthony Van Dyck was born at Antwerp on March 22nd, 1599. It was said formerly that his father, Frans Van Dyck, was a painter on glass, but later research has disclosed the fact that he carried on business as a merchant. His mother practised the art of embroidery with no mean skill, and her works appear to have been held in considerable esteem. The young painter had, however, the misfortune of losing her when he arrived at the age of eight. We know but little of his early years, but he must have shown considerable aptitude for drawing, for we find him already the pupil of Hendrik van Balen in 1609. The latter painter had received instruction in his art from Adam van Oort, the master of Rubens, but he utilised the instruction he had received in a very different way from that of his fellow-pupil. He studied in Italy

for some time, and upon his return to Antwerp became one of the most popular painters in the city. Several works still remaining there testify that his sojourn in the South had not entirely effaced his Flemish training. He excelled particularly in cabinet pictures, with subjects inspired by the classics, in which the landscapes were sometimes painted by Jan Brueghel. These are wrought with wonderful finish, and were much admired by his contemporaries for the purity of their colouring. At the same time, whilst being a good craftsman and filling an honourable position in the history of the school, it cannot be claimed that he possessed genius in an extraordinary degree.

It is probable, however, that a more suitable master for the young Van Dyck could not have been found. In the studio of so staid and sober a painter he would not be brought into contact with any of those pyrotechnics which have wrought such havoc with the art of young artists

when encountered at the onset of their careers. On the other hand, Van Balen is likely to have insisted upon great care being exercised in drawing and in the finishing of minutest detail. Such rigid training is excellent, for whilst it does not hinder further developments upon other lines in the least degree, it insures that all future progress shall be built upon a solid foundation.

At this time, however, Rubens, having returned from his wanderings in Italy and Spain, had settled in Antwerp. His new position as Court painter to the Archduke Albert and the Archduchess Isabella brought him into great prominence and insured him constant occupation. Even at this early period his art was approaching maturity, and if he had not yet developed the dazzling brilliancy and facility of his later time, he was still far ahead of any painter modern Flanders had produced. We have only to contemplate the works of his contemporaries, and those who immediately preceded

him, to imagine what a profound sensation this young man created in Antwerp. It seldom fell to the lot of an artist who was but just over thirty to have been in the service of such an illustrious personage as the Duke of Mantua. The latter, moreover, so highly esteemed his talent that he wished him to return to his service even after he had returned to Antwerp. Further, the Duke had such confidence in Rubens' diplomatic ability that he sent him upon important business to Philip III. in Madrid. The experience he had gained both in Italy and in Spain, where he had seen and copied many of the greatest works of the Italian Renaissance, served to develop a genius which in itself was of the first order, and the fruits were immediately visible upon his arrival in Antwerp. We can well picture to ourselves the effect of the masculine vigour, nay, more, the bravado of his brush-work upon the staid and homely Flemish artists. Their minuteness of finish, delicacy, cool transparencies and silveriness of colour-

ing seem indeed *petit* when pitted against the irrepressible dash and golden palette of Rubens. In spite of this he appears not to have created any enemies. On the contrary, his fellow-artists seem to have recognised his superiority, and many were influenced by his method. To estimate to the full the revolution he wrought we must compare the masters whom we found installed in favour in Flanders with the school he so soon created. The older painters being affected in so visible a degree, we can quite imagine how easily one so young and impressionable as Van Dyck would submit to the new influence. Here was a master whose art, glowing with the full-blooded vigour of Italy, yet retained the healthy freshness of his native country. Restrained and held in leash as he would be in the studio of Van Balen, we can sympathise with his yearning to migrate to that of Rubens. He speedily joined that ever-swelling body of artists who gathered themselves round the great master. For some years he worked

PLATE III.—PRINCE D'ARENBERG

(In Lord Spencer's Collection, Althorp)

A portrait characteristic of one of the most popular phases of Van Dyck's art. It exhibits in a remarkable measure his sense of appropriateness as far as the setting of a portrait is concerned. The background has been chosen largely with a view to accentuating the salient points of the picture, and whilst being, in consequence, strictly subservient to the portrait is yet treated in a bold and vigorous manner.

side by side with Snyders and Seghers. The progress he made during this time was considerable; indeed, it is frequently difficult to decide whether certain pictures produced in these years are the work of the master or the pupil, so thoroughly had he acquired Rubens' technique.

In connection with this a story, the details of which have frequently been challenged, is told. It is said that Rubens, leaving his studio one day to take a walk, had left a picture in the process of painting upon his easel. The students were anxious to inspect it and observe the method he was employing. Finally, they induced his servant to admit them. Being a numerous crowd, some amount of struggling took place to get near the canvas. The result was that one of them, it is said Van Diepenbeck, fell against the canvas and injured the picture. Dismay spread throughout the room. When they had recovered their presence of mind, some one proposed that the damage should be repaired before

Rubens returned. By common consent Van Dyck was chosen, and he set to work with a will. Upon Rubens entering his studio next morning, surrounded by his pupils, he selected the repaired part and said that that was by no means the worst piece he had painted the day before. Upon a closer examination the damage revealed itself, but so cleverly had Van Dyck performed his task that Rubens decided to leave it as it was.

From such tales as this has arisen the tradition that Rubens became so jealous of his pupil that he endeavoured to persuade him to abandon historical painting and devote the whole of his time to portraiture. Such statements are not only in opposition to all that we know of Rubens' character, but there is the further evidence that when he finally parted from Van Dyck they were on the very best of terms. Indeed, Rubens went so far as to make him a present of one of his finest horses for the purpose of his journey

in Italy, whilst Van Dyck left with his master a portrait of Rubens' wife as a souvenir.

He further retained the services of Van Dyck as his assistant, which he would not have done had any jealousy existed between them. It was probably the pressure of commissions, which flowed in upon him in innumerable quantities, that induced him to take this step. It was quite impossible for the master himself to accomplish all the work he undertook. Outside Italy he was the first master to employ his school as a sort of manufactory on a large scale. So well did he train his assistants that he had only to make the sketch himself, and to superintend its painting, for a large work to be turned out in an incredibly short time. As Van Dyck was his most capable assistant, he would certainly employ him upon the important parts, and as it has already been pointed out that it is difficult to differentiate between the works of the two men at this time, it would be still

more difficult to decide definitely what hand Van Dyck had in the large number of religious and historical pictures that were being sent out under Rubens' name at this time.

During this period, however, Van Dyck had acquired a reputation of his own. He had been elected a master of the Antwerp Corporation of painters in 1618, that is, whilst still in his twentieth year.

II

THE JOURNEY TO ITALY

It was the habit of most Northern artists at that time to make a journey in Italy. The renown of the works created during the preceding two centuries by the Italian Renaissance had spread all over Europe, and no young artist considered his education complete without having spent a few years in studying them. Moreover, they found that patrons patronised them better if they had

been through this Italian training. These ideas were rather dictated by the prevailing fashion than by any solid good to be derived by the artist who underwent it. We have innumerable examples of Dutchmen and Flemings whose natural genius became perverted upon Italian soil. Nicholas Berchem and Karl Dujardin were striking examples of the sad results which frequently accrued from thus transplanting themselves into a country with which their temperament had nothing in common. It is probable that had Karl Dujardin remained in Holland, the world would have been enriched by a landscape painter of the first order, for he had gifts far above even the average painter of his time. But immediately on reaching Italy he succumbed to the influences surrounding him, and endeavoured to get rid as far as possible of his early training, and to see things and render them in the Italian way. The result was, that whilst he never threw off the Dutch character of his scenes and figures, he enveloped them with a

conventional atmosphere as monotonous as it is untrue.

We have already seen the results the Italian journey had upon Rubens. There was no inducement for Van Dyck, comparing, as he would be able to, his master's pictures painted before his journey to Italy and those which he executed afterwards, to undertake the same trouble. It is rather to be thought that he was decided to see the artistic Mecca for himself, by the glowing accounts of its treasures that he heard from time to time from Rubens' own lips. For the latter, small as had been the influence of the great Italian masters upon his work, was nevertheless of a disposition peculiarly adapted for keenly appreciating merit whenever it was brought under his notice. We can quite imagine that during those early days in Antwerp his pupils whilst at work would hear innumerable accounts of the beauties of this or that picture, and the more enthusiastic of them would consequently only be the more eager to judge of its beauties for themselves. During the execu-

tion of the large canvasses that were turned out in such quantities from the studio, Rubens doubtlessly prefaced alterations he made by referring to many a master's method, and recounted how the masterpieces upon which his comments were framed had been brought to completion.

During the latter portion of the time Van Dyck stopped with Rubens he was only acting as his assistant, and consequently would be free to leave when he liked. He would probably be quite aware that his technique was the equal of his master's, and would realise that he had received all the tuition he possibly could in his present situation. Ambitious as he was, there is no doubt that he yearned for an opportunity to learn for himself the message the great masters had to impart to him. Whilst we can quite imagine that Rubens would be sorry to part with so capable an assistant, there was not any evidence that he did not do everything in his power to assist him to carry out his project.

In 1623—when he was but twenty-four years of age—Van Dyck left Antwerp on his journey southward. He appears not to have got any further than a village near Brussels, where he succumbed to the attractions of a certain young lady named Annah van Ophem. At her instigation he painted two pictures for the parish church there. In one, representing St. Martin sharing his cloak with a beggar, he took himself as a model for the saint. The parish authorities being, it is said, of a mercenary turn of mind, had it valued, and, hearing that it was worth 4000 florins, sold it to a M. Hoët. The people of the village, however, hearing of the sale, determined to prevent the removal of the picture at all costs, and when the purchaser arrived he found not only the peasants, but their wives and children, armed, and was obliged to escape ignominiously through the priest's garden and return to Brussels without his prize. Whilst still residing at the village, Van Dyck painted the portrait of Annah van

PLATE IV.—PORTRAIT OF VAN DYCK (OR THE ARTIST)

(In Lord Spencer's Collection, Althorp)

One of the most striking portraits of the artist. Painted at a fairly late date in his career, it shows the painter prosperous and rich and by no means ill pleased with his lot in the world. Full of life and gaiety, his joyous face gives us a good idea of the gratification he found in life almost to the end. Indeed, a deal of the fascination of his art arises from his approaching his subjects in this happy frame of mind.

Ophem, surrounded with the dogs belonging to the Infanta Isabella, of which either she or her father had charge, and a picture of the Holy Family, in which she figured as the principal personage.

Rubens, hearing of the prolonged sojourn of his pupil at Saveltheim, arrived one day upon the scene, and finally induced Van Dyck to tear himself from his mistress and continue his journey to Italy.

The great object of his visit was to study the Venetian masters, and accordingly he repaired forthwith to the City of the Lagoons. We can picture him standing for the first time before those wonderful portraits of Titian and Tintoretto, Palma-Vecchio and Moroni, about which he had heard so much in his student days in Antwerp. That he was not disappointed is evidenced by the fact that almost immediately a change is observable in his method. He cast aside as speedily as possible the silveriness and coolness which had characterised his palette

when working in Antwerp, and endeavoured to assimilate in as great a degree as possible the golden luminosity and subtle handling of the mighty Venetians. It is probable that Titian held the first place in his estimation, for it is rather upon his method that all his subsequent developments in technique are based. But perhaps full justice has not been done to the influence Moroni had in moulding his youthful genius. One has only to compare, for example, the full-length portrait of an Italian nobleman, No. 1316 in the National Gallery, with that marvellous representation of Philip le Roy in the Wallace Collection, reproduced in this volume, to see the connection between the two painters. There is the same air of distinction in each portrait, and in silveriness of colouring and elegance of pose there is much in common. These are not isolated examples in the life-work of the two masters, but are rather representative of a whole series of portraits in which their genius runs on nearly parallel lines.

We cannot wonder that Van Dyck was not much impressed by such of the Umbrian painters as he came in contact with. There was still left in these men the remains of that mysticism which was born of the intimate contact with religion in relation to life that had originally brought it into being. The religious art of the Netherlands—I am speaking now of that which arose after the middle of the sixteenth century—was built upon a purely human and materialistic basis. If a scriptural scene was represented it was brought before us as a subject from every-day life ; a martyrdom with all its brutality, a crucifixion with all its physical horror, and a madonna and child simply as a peasant girl with a child, set in homely surroundings. Our artist, endowed with the same temperament as the men who had created such works, and who moreover was perhaps the best exponent of this school of painting, with the possible exception of Rubens himself, could not be expected to be touched with the subtleties of Botticelli or Filippino Lippi.

Further, it is not unlikely that he found he could learn little from the technique of Raphael or Andrea del Sarto. But with the Venetians it was quite otherwise. From the early days of Giovanni Bellini they seem to have treated religious subjects in just as materialistic a manner, if less grossly and repugnantly, than the Flemings themselves. One has but to contemplate the life-work of Titian to see how little religious feeling, in the Florentine or mystical sense of the term, there was in his art. Even the two most impressive religious pictures he ever painted, the "Entombment," in the Louvre, and the "Christ crowned with Thorns," at Munich, would certainly not have pleased the patrons of Ghirlandajo or Pollaiuolo. But Titian and his contemporaries constitute the zenith attained by Italian materialistic art, at any rate in point of technique.

It is more than probable that Van Dyck found certain points in his master's method crude compared with that of the Venetians, and although, as we shall see later, he

PLATE V.—PHILIPPE LE ROY, SEIGNEUR DE RAVEL

(In the Wallace Collection)

The masterpiece of Van Dyck's second Flemish manner. In it we see the culmination of the influences he had brought away with him from Italy sobered by a renewed contact with the productions of his illustrious master. The dignity of pose, probably derived from Moroni and Titian, united with the fact that his immense technical powers are brought into play in an unsurpassed degree, certainly proclaim it as one of the greatest portraits in the world. Van Dyck executed an etching of Philippe le Roy, probably based upon this portrait which ranks very high amongst his productions in this way.

endeavoured after his return to Flanders to retrace his steps in a measure, the influences he brought away with him from Italy remained during his whole life.

He went from Venice to Genoa, and there his style created such an impression that he found many of the nobility eager to have their portraits painted by him. Formerly, his Italian manner, as it is called, was to be best studied in that city, but as years have rolled on many of the finest examples have become scattered over Europe and America. The two fine portraits recently added to the National Gallery date from this period, and although, owing to their condition, they do not set forth his talents at their best, will give a good idea of the changes his method had undergone since he left Antwerp. Two of the noblest portraits of the Genoese period were formerly in the collection of Sir Robert Peel, but, after being sold at auction in London some few years ago, finally found a permanent home in the Berlin Gallery.

From Genoa he went to Rome, and, his

reputation having preceded him, he was soon loaded with commissions for both historical subjects and portraits. It is said, however, that his residence here was rendered unpleasant by a number of artists persecuting him by reason of his not wishing to fall in with their methods of life. Be this as it may, he returned to Genoa, and after some time departed for Palermo; but the plague breaking out, some time after his arrival, he determined to return to Flanders.

Van Dyck had reason to congratulate himself, not only upon the amount of benefit which he had received from his sojourn in Italy, but also on account of the flattering manner in which he had been received everywhere. His complete success in these two respects was calculated to infuse confidence in him for the future. He was now fully equipped in every way, and his good luck in the matter of patronage, so lavishly bestowed upon him in Italy, was destined to pursue him in his future career, until finally the immense amount of work he undertook

in consequence had an adverse influence upon his later productions.

III

THE SECOND FLEMISH MANNER

The reputation of Van Dyck, great as it was prior to leaving Antwerp, had materially grown during his absence in Italy. From time to time reports reached his fellow-townsmen of the brilliant success he was achieving there, the high personages with whom he was mingling, and the flattering praise accorded to his productions. We may be sure that returning travellers would relate the astonishing progress he was making, and consequently his friends would await with eager anticipation the proofs of all they had heard. There could be no doubt that Rubens would be amongst those who would be most interested in his progress, and he would be curious to see the influence the Italians had exercised upon his technique.

His talents were soon put to the essay in

the form of a commission for a large picture representing St. Augustine in ecstasy, surrounded by angels and saints, for the Church of the Augustines in Antwerp. As a result of this first effort, both his patrons and the public were delighted, and commissions for works of a similar character flowed in upon him from every side.

Rubens had fairly early in his career instituted an ingenious method for making his works widely known. He employed, under his own direction, a number of engravers whose names have become household words. Technically considered, they were as well equipped as any who have ever lived. The names of Paul Pontius, Lucas Vorsterman, the two Bolswerts, Peter de Jode are held in reverence by every admirer of engraving. Their remarkable fidelity in transcribing the works of Rubens render it frequently unnecessary to see the originals themselves in order thoroughly to study them. I am perhaps not going too far when I say that they understood the art of trans-

lating colour effects into black and white in a manner unknown previous to their time and never surpassed afterwards. The tone values of the paintings themselves are preserved. There is no doubt that this excellence was due to the guidance of Rubens. He superintended each plate in process of preparation and rectified with his own hand any errors that might have crept in. In this way Rubens rendered an immense service to art. Quantities of these prints went out to foreign countries and were prized by both artists and collectors, serving to stimulate the former to renewed efforts and to improve the taste of the latter. At the same time, he is to be credited with having brought the engraving art to a pitch which has never been surpassed.

When Rubens saw of what his pupil was now capable, he immediately turned the attention of his engravers to his works, and until Van Dyck practically ceased historical painting, we have as many plates worked after his designs as from those of his master.

It was soon after his return to Antwerp that he received the commission to paint the celebrated picture at Malines representing the Crucifixion. Of this remarkable canvas we can but form an inadequate idea to-day. The exceeding negligence with which it has been kept, coupled with the continual covering up of the picture, thus depriving it of light, which every oil-painting requires for its preservation, has contributed to render it a wreck of its former self. The subject, to which we are so accustomed that we are but little moved when we encounter it in the great galleries, is here presented to us in a most terrible and essentially human aspect. The extraordinary expression of physical pain infused into the heads of the two thieves, one on each side of Christ, together with the energy of their efforts to detach themselves from their awful position, will cause a shudder to creep over even the most phlegmatic person. This is foiled by the superb treatment of the head of the Saviour. In the latter is an extraordinary mixture of pain, mental and

physical, combined with a sublime look of resignation. Sir Joshua Reynolds regarded it as one of the masterpieces of the world, and there will be not a few who will concur in his judgment.

Van Dyck was not, however, content simply to exercise his powers in this way. An innumerable series of portraits date from this time, notably the well-known series representing the most prominent contemporary artists of Flanders. These productions are well known from the engravings executed after them; the originals are now distributed throughout the world.

It is said that Van Dyck's position in the Netherlands, in spite of the quantity of patronage bestowed upon him, was anything but pleasant. The jealousy of his rivals was particularly irksome to a man of his disposition. In the intrigues with which he was surrounded Rubens had no part; on the contrary, he always sustained the cause of his brilliant pupil with the utmost enthusiasm and fidelity, and it is probable, in view of this fact

and the renown which Van Dyck himself had attained, that he would have worn down the opposition and caused the calumnies with which he was beset to fall upon the heads of their originators. But the taste for travel which he had developed in Italy probably impelled him to seek relief outside his own country. Accordingly we find him employed at the Hague—certainly not a great distance from the seat of his recent troubles, but sufficiently far to remove him from their reach. Here he painted the portrait of the Prince of Orange and innumerable personages of his Court, in addition to receiving ample encouragement from the foreign ambassadors.

It was not, however, to be expected that so small a city with its limited scope would long suffice for a man of his ambitions. His eyes were set upon England.

The encouragement which Charles I. extended to the fine arts, and his liberality in patronising them, induced him to think that a suitable field for the exercise of his

PLATE VI.—PORTRAIT OF ONE OF CHARLES I.'S CHILDREN

(In the Academy of Fine Arts, Rome)

Possibly the best known and one of the most deservedly popular of the master's child portraits. It will bear comparison for charm and delicacy of handling with any of the productions of our great English masters. In fact, it was largely after a study of Van Dyck's wonderful pictures of children that Gainsborough formed his last and greatest manner.

talents was open to him in our country. Accordingly about 1632 he arrived in London. England was not, however, quite strange to him, for about eleven years previously—that is, before his departure to Italy—he had already been here upon a visit. Upon this occasion, however, he does not appear to have succeeded in attracting the attentions of the king, and consequently he did not meet with the success he had counted upon. Remaining but a few months, he decided to return to Antwerp, fully resolved to make it a permanent place of abode.

Meanwhile, however, Rubens had been sent by the Infanta Isabella on a diplomatic visit to Charles, who received him in the most gracious manner and created him a knight. The flattering attentions bestowed upon Rubens during his stay, coupled with his estimation of the king's character and taste, created a most favourable impression upon him, and when he returned to Antwerp he probably dispelled in a measure Van Dyck's antipathy to our country. Mean-

while Charles had seen the latter's portrait of Nicholas Lanière, his chapel master, and was so impressed with its qualities that he sent an invitation to Van Dyck to return.

An opportunity so favourable to advancement was not lightly to be passed over, and Van Dyck decided once more to try his fortune here.

This decision constituted a turning-point in the life and style of the artist, and we shall see him in England passing the most prosperous years of his life.

IV

VAN DYCK IN ENGLAND

There never was a time in the history of the English Court when such opportunities for advancement were presented to an artist possessing the genius of Van Dyck as during the reign of Charles I. He was one of the few monarchs of England who recognised the civilising influence of art on the nation and encouraged it in a manner quite beyond his means. It mattered not

of what period, school, or nationality a work happened to be, so long as it possessed a high degree of merit, it appealed strongly to the king. We have only to consider the superb collection he brought together, only to be ruthlessly dispersed by the Commonwealth, to gauge the refinement of his taste. Many of the priceless possessions of foreign galleries formed part of his collection, and if England had only been in a position to retain her hold upon them we should no doubt to-day be in possession of the finest assemblage of Italian art in the world. I need only enumerate the sumptuous portrait of Alfonso of Ferrara and Laura d'Dianti and the "Entombment," by Titian, in the Louvre; the portrait of Erasmus, by Holbein, in the Louvre, and the marvellous portrait of a young woman, for so many years wrongly ascribed to the same master, at the Hague; the portrait of Albrecht Dürer by himself in the Prado, and the two masterpieces by Geertgen van St. Jans in the Imperial Gallery at Vienna, to demonstrate the quality

of his many possessions. In England we still have retained a few of his treasures. Conspicuous among them are those masterpieces of Andrea Mantegna, the "Triumph of Julius Cæsar," at Hampton Court, the Albrecht Dürer, and the Lorenzo Lotto, in the same gallery, together with the "Mercury, Cupid and Venus," by Correggio, in the National Gallery.

Needless to say that a collector, who had sufficient taste to bring together such a notable assemblage, would demand a very high degree of talent indeed in a painter who was working for the Court. Charles had, moreover, been brought into contact with the brilliant achievements of Rubens, and would in consequence expect a great deal from a pupil whose merits he had heard so extolled.

The portrait of Nicholas Lanière appealed to him immediately. He saw in Van Dyck a man whose performances, even at this early age, far surpassed those of any painter then working in England. Charles, who

immensely admired the portraits of Rubens, saw in those of his pupil an Italian quality lacking in the former, and this would additionally attract him.

Van Dyck's reception was most flattering. He was given a lodging at Blackfriars amongst the other painters, and was set to work immediately for the king. Charles was quite as much taken with the courtly qualities and conversation of his newly-found painter as by his talent, and greatly enjoyed his company. He was accustomed to go to Blackfriars by water, and to chat with Van Dyck whilst having his portrait painted. From this time date the innumerable portraits of Charles and his Queen, Henrietta Maria, with which we are so familiar.

The fashion thus set by the king was speedily taken up by his Court, and the nobility of England competed with one another for the privilege of having their portraits painted by the brilliant Fleming.

Soon after his arrival Van Dyck received the honour of knighthood, and, in addition

to being appointed painter to his Majesty, had an annuity of £200 per annum settled upon him.

The quantity of commissions which now flowed in upon him was prodigious, and he was sorely taxed to keep pace with them. He was enabled in consequence to raise his prices considerably without in the least diminishing the patronage bestowed upon him. He commenced to entertain on a lavish scale, and his table was frequented by the highest in the land. It is said that after occupying the morning in painting portraits he would invite his sitters to dinner, and then, from the study he had made of their countenances during the meal, would work upon the portraits again in the afternoon.

Although Van Dyck had been accustomed to good society and living, the overwhelming good fortune which was now his lot appears to have developed bad habits in him. He soon acquired luxurious habits, which finally undermined his health. Passionately fond of music, he liberally encouraged all the pro-

fessors of that art, and gratuitously painted the portraits of its most celebrated exponents.

The demands upon his purse at this time must have been enormous, and in order to increase his output, and consequently his income, he had recourse to the means he had seen Rubens so successfully employ in Antwerp. He brought together a school of painters, who worked under his directions. The portraits dating from this period consequently not only show the marked deterioration in his technique, but also, beyond the heads and hands and a few other essential details, contained but little of his own work. His assistants were so thoroughly trained that they were enabled to paint the draperies and their accessories in a style which welded perfectly with his own brushwork.

These facts have to be carefully remembered whenever we are contemplating a work of the English period of Van Dyck, for were we to form our judgment solely upon the portraits he had painted prior to going to England we should reject many of the former as not being

from his hand. There is further the added difficulty that his assistants executed pictures in his manner on their own account, and it is only by the lack of that spark of genius he was enabled to infuse in those parts of a portrait he executed with his own hand that we are enabled to differentiate between them. Many of the portraits of the king and queen which were sent as presents all over Europe were but the productions of his studio.

It is only in such superb presentations of Charles as that in the Louvre, at Windsor, and in the National Gallery that we are enabled to judge of his capabilities at this period. He now almost entirely deserted historical painting. There was no demand for it in England, and his attention was exclusively devoted to portraiture. Moreover, if we may judge from the ever-increasing facility with which he was wont to paint, it may be fairly said that his attention during these years was being diverted from painting to pleasure. He never lost interest in his art, but he was impelled to adopt a more facile

PLATE VII.—PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST'S WIFE

(In the Pinakothek, Munich)

A remarkably good example of Van Dyck's power of depicting female character. Whenever he is faced with a sitter in whom he is interested he suited his technique to the points he wished to emphasise. It is the possession of this versatility which enables him to infuse so much seductive charm into his women portraits and such trenchant vigour into those of men.

manner by the pressure of his engagements and his ever-increasing expenses.

He kept a country house at Eltham in Kent, where he spent the summer—a form of extravagance more defensible than many in which he was accustomed to indulge.

Meanwhile, he had contracted a marriage with Mary Ruthven, granddaughter of Lord Ruthven, Earl of Gowrie, by whom he had one daughter. His wife, however, brought him no dowrie, but was considered one of the greatest beauties of her time. Soon after his marriage he left England with his wife for the purpose of showing her his native country. They travelled for some time, visiting his family and friends. Then the idea occurred to him that he would proceed to Paris, with a view of sharing, if possible, in the contemplated decoration of the Louvre, and thus win laurels equal to those Rubens had gained by his works in the Luxembourg. He arrived, however, too late: Nicholas Poussin had been brought specially from Rome for the purpose, and

the work was in hand. Disappointed in this, and still desiring to execute some great work by which he might secure a lasting renown, he returned to England and proposed to the king, through the medium of his old and trusty friend Sir Kenelm Digby, to embellish the wall of the Banqueting House at Whitehall with the history of the Order of the Garter. The ceiling of this sumptuous chamber had already been painted by Rubens, and Van Dyck no doubt considered that his work would blend admirably with that of his master. The sum he asked for, £8000, although considerable, would no doubt not have stood in the way of the execution of the project had it occurred at an earlier date in the reign of the unfortunate Charles. The kingdom, however, was already in a turbulent condition. Funds were scarce, and such as existed might have to be employed at any moment in raising an army to defend the king's cause. Charles was now occupied in a life-and-death struggle with his people, and had no time to devote to

artistic pursuits. Van Dyck consequently waited in vain for an answer, and it is to be supposed that meanwhile commissions did not come to him as easily as formerly. Young as he still was, the effects of his past luxurious life were beginning to tell upon him, and, coupled with the disappointment occasioned by the rejection of his proposal, contributed to bring on gout. He began to have financial worries too, but these can hardly have been sufficiently great to have troubled him much, for he left at his death property to the value of £20,000. He therefore turned his attention, probably in emulation, or by the advice, of his friend Sir Kenelm Digby, to the pursuit of the philosopher's stone, and, needless to say, the results of his experiments and the money he expended upon them only aggravated the state of his health. He rapidly sickened, and died in London on December 9th, 1641, when forty-two years of age. He was accorded a magnificent funeral in St. Paul's Cathedral, and was buried in a tomb beside that of John of Gaunt.

V

VAN DYCK'S POSITION IN ART

During the past twenty years the public has become so educated in matters artistic that it wishes at once to definitely assign a certain position to an artist with whose works it is familiar. We live in an age of comparison, and as opportunities for its exercise, owing to the cheapening of travel, are so manifestly improved of recent years, a more just estimation exists in the mind of the public regarding an artist's worth than formerly. Van Dyck, as I said at the beginning of the opening chapter, has never fallen from the high position he occupied in his own day. He has always appealed to the student and the artist of every nationality, and if we survey portrait painting since his day, we shall see that he has exercised more influence than any other artist who has ever lived. It may be said that Titian, for a couple of centuries after his death, was the idol almost

exclusively worshipped, and that during the last fifty years Velazquez and Rembrandt have been the ideals painters have dangled before the public and themselves. But both of these mighty masters have had their ups and downs. The genius of Rembrandt was certainly not appreciated until the end of the eighteenth century, and even then his stupendous powers were not recognised as they have been in our own day.

The worship of Velazquez is quite a modern institution, and it is not at all unlikely, in the opinion of well-informed critics, that if his influence, which has now reached a decadent stage, is not curtailed it will create as much havoc amongst modern portrait painters as the example of Constable has had upon certain phases of landscape painting.

It can never be laid to the charge of Van Dyck that any period of his art has exercised a permanently baneful influence. True, immediately after the Restoration, a school arose, headed by Sir Peter Lely and Sir Godfrey Kneller, who claimed to have

followed the traditions of Van Dyck. It requires, however, but little comparison between even his later and slighter works and those of Lely, who was incomparably the greatest of the portrait painters working in England in the interval between Van Dyck and Hogarth, to see how far below Van Dyck's standard portrait painting had fallen, and how little of his method there was left in it.

Van Dyck has exercised more influence in England than abroad. Many of our greatest eighteenth-century portrait painters have largely formed themselves upon his example. Gainsborough was the most conspicuous instance of this. From his earliest days he worshipped the great Fleming, and that the spell never left him may be gauged from his dying words: "We are all going to Heaven, and Van Dyck is of the company." Even prior to his departure for Bath, his portraits possessed many of the qualities of Van Dyck, but after arriving in the western city, then the centre of

a rich and fashionable world, he had manifold opportunities of studying his favourite master. His brushwork became at once more refined, his colouring more transparent, and his method in every way more facile. Before leaving Bath he had produced portraits which are worthy to be placed alongside those of Van Dyck, and after a few years' residence in London had created those marvels of the brush which contend for supremacy with the finest works of the Fleming. For example, what portrait of the latter master could be cited to surpass the portrait of Mrs. Graham in the Gallery at Edinburgh, the superb group at Dulwich, or the "Blue Boy," in the possession of the Duke of Westminster?

Reynolds appears to have worked more in emulation of Titian than Van Dyck. He painted in a solider and apparently slower manner, and if the slickness—if I may be allowed an Americanism—of the Flemish master appealed to him, it yet had no visible effect upon his own technique.

The minor masters of our school demonstrate materially how much they owed to Van Dyck. Allan Ramsay and Cotes bear adequate witness of this.

Full justice, however, has not been done to the good wrought for English art by his immediate followers and pupils. It is only of late years that the portraits of old Stone are beginning to be sorted out from those of the later period of Van Dyck. Stone was occupied in copying or making replicas of the portraits of Van Dyck, and so well did he succeed in his task that, even to this day, numerous works by him are to be found in the country houses of England passing under the name of the great master.

Then we have William Dobson, whose works are worthy of yet more study than has hitherto been accorded them. He did not long survive Van Dyck, dying in 1646 at the early age of thirty-six. He was probably the most gifted of all his pupils, and had he lived at any other period would probably have been held in great estimation. There is an

PLATE VIII.—THE DUKE OF RICHMOND

(In the Louvre)

This wonderful portrait is one of the many specimens possessed by the Louvre of the great Flemish portrait-painter.

excellent example of his brush in the National Gallery, the portrait of Endymion Porter, groom of the bedchamber of Charles I. In many of the other examples strewn about the country he shows yet a greater approach to Van Dyck. Still, the Trafalgar Square picture is a worthy example of his powers at his best. His masculine handling and sense of colour place him, from a purely artistic point of view, far above such men as Lely and Kneller, who followed him.

Another painter who wrought excellent work under the Commonwealth was Robert Walker. He was much patronised by Oliver Cromwell and his party. He appears to have been one of the few portrait painters who flourished at this time. He acquired in a remarkable manner the liquid and transparent style affected by Van Dyck during his last years in England, and coupling with this remarkable powers of fidelity, his portraits possess great attractions for the artist as well as the student of history.

As I have already said, the influence of

Van Dyck upon the painters who flourished throughout the three succeeding reigns was a decadent one. Sir Peter Lely, who came to England, at the age of twenty-three, with the Prince of Orange, the son-in-law of Charles I., was the best of all these men. He was born in Westphalia, of Dutch parentage, and was educated in the school of Pieter Fransz de Grebber at Haarlem. But his entire method was built upon Van Dyck. He seems not to have had a bad time under the Commonwealth, for he was employed to paint Cromwell's portrait. It is said that he had instructions upon this occasion to paint him, "warts, pimples, and all." It was not, however, till Charles II. had ascended the throne that he reached the zenith of his fame. Then came the long series of ladies of the Court with which we are so familiar. They are all set in the same artificial setting, a landscape half conventional, half natural in feeling, a languid and somewhat haughty air about the heads, together with draperies destined to accentuate the artificial appear-

ance of the whole portrait. One can see at a glance that it was from Van Dyck he had learned the placing and handling of the heads, hands, and backgrounds, but what a monotonous procession it is. In order to appreciate the superficialities of Lely a number of his portraits must be seen together. We then see how monotonous he was, how few of those qualities he possessed which go to make up a great artist. That he had a considerable amount of technique at his command can be seen in such portraits as the "Duchess of Cleveland" in the National Portrait Gallery, but in others again he fell so far below this level of excellence, that one is sometimes tempted to reject many perfectly glorious pictures as not being from his hand.

The art of Lely had attained great popularity amongst the aristocracy whose lives called into being the decadent art of this period. All who sought the public favour tried to catch his manner, and hence arose quite a number of imitators. Occasionally Lely was surpassed by some of

his scholars. For example, John Greenhill absorbed more of the real qualities of Van Dyck than his master. The remarkable portrait in the Gallery of Dulwich College shows unmistakable signs of genius of a high order, and had he not fallen into irregular habits and died at the age of thirty-two he might have achieved great things.

Sir Godfrey Kneller, who followed Lely, was infinitely inferior to him as an artist. He claimed, too, to continue the Van Dyck tradition, but by this time the art of portrait painting had sunk into such a deplorable condition, owing to the depravity of public taste and to the slavish imitation of the brillant Fleming, that there are few of his pictures that appeal in the least to the artistic sense. It was not until the great period of English painting, beginning with Hogarth, of which I have already spoken, that the downward career of painting in this country was finally checked.

So far our attention has been devoted to discovering the visible effect of Van

Dyck's art upon his contemporaries and followers. The fact that on the whole his influence was decadent in this direction must not allow us to detract from his own qualities. We must rather search for the reasons which caused his art to retain such a hold upon generations of English painters. It must not be forgotten that Van Dyck's profession in England was essentially that of a portrait painter, and he was employed by the aristocracy exclusively. He, indeed, may be called the aristocratic painter *par excellence*, and in this respect does not yield to either Titian or Velazquez. It was, however, when he strayed from his normal course that he revealed his deficiencies; the few extant portraits of the lower classes demonstrate amply how unsuited he was to portraying any below the upper ranks of life. To every plebeian sitter he imparted an air of gentility and distinction quite out of keeping. Until the advent of Wilson and Gainsborough, portraiture was the sole art, at any rate, as far as painting is concerned,

that flourished in England. Its patrons were all of the upper classes, and the Van Dyck manner, which by this time had become a tradition, was recognised by both artists and sitters as the best suited to their purpose. It was only in the eighteenth century that the general financial and educational uplifting of the middle classes called into being that naturalist school which finally drove all others from the field.

It is probable, however, that the painters who worked so slavishly in Van Dyck's English manner had never become acquainted with his finest achievements in portraiture. With few exceptions these were executed before he settled permanently in England.

It is practically certain that Gainsborough, for example, had never seen such portraits as the Philippe le Roy and his wife, now among the greatest treasures of Hertford House, which date from the years between 1628–32. It was then that Van Dyck had reached his maximum development, and it is by the portraits he made in the ten years

round about this date that he will probably be judged by posterity. The facile ease and silvery liquidity of his latter manner may have an irresistible charm for those who have not studied the master very deeply, but for the artist and the student the works he had achieved, before success had crowned his efforts in the same measure that it did shortly after his arrival here, will ever remain the standard by which to judge him.

At this time he displayed great assiduity to learn anything he could either from his predecessors or from his contemporaries. In this connection it may not be out of place to relate a story, the truth of which has frequently been challenged.

Having come across some portraits by Franz Hals, and being very anxious to see the master at work, he made a journey to Haarlem. Upon inquiring at the Dutchman's studio, he found that Hals was at his usual tavern. He accordingly sent word to him that a stranger was waiting to have his portrait painted, and that he had but two

hours to give him before leaving the town. Hals arrived immediately, and, in view of the shortness of time at his disposal, set to work with a will. Van Dyck, who, needless to say, had not been recognised, remarked, as Hals was putting on the finishing touches, that painting seemed a very easy process, and asked to be allowed to try his hand. Accordingly they changed places, and Hals soon perceived that the stranger was no novice in the handling of the brush. As the work proceeded his curiosity became more and more whetted, and finally, unable to restrain his curiosity any longer, he went over to see how the work was progressing. One can imagine his surprise when he saw a masterly portrait in process of completion, and, recognising the handling, immediately cried out: "Why, you are none other than Van Dyck, for he alone could have achieved what you have done."

As an historical painter he takes a very high rank amongst seventeenth-century masters; he was far ahead in vigour of treat-

ment and in strength of brushwork of any of his contemporaries in Italy. The school of Bologna, whilst possessing a refinement he never attained, is effeminate in comparison with him. Their very eclecticism prevented them giving free rein to their fancy, and consequently the great majority of their works possess a restraint of feeling, coupled with a perfection of execution, which neither Rubens nor Van Dyck surpassed.

Van Dyck certainly stands out as the greatest scholar of Rubens in every way. His fellow-pupils whom he left behind in Flanders could not compare with him. The works of the cleverest of them, Gaspar de Crayer, appear formal, indeed, when compared with any of the stupendous religious compositions still preserved in the great churches of his native country. Their chief merit is, as I have before said, in the exceedingly human presentment of the subject. The sense of physical pain and of human brutality has never been better treated, and, if at times he carries this quality to a painful degree, no charge

could be levelled against him on the score of feebleness or of lack of thoroughness in making his meaning quite clear.

As compared with similar works by Rubens they possess an interest for us which the latter cannot always command, by reason of their being conceived and finished by the master himself, whereas those of Rubens, more often than not, were only worked upon by the master after pupils had carried out the greater part of the work.

Van Dyck's religious and historical pictures belong to the period of his career when his execution was at its zenith, and consequently they possess an extraordinary degree of interest to the artist.

It is, however, to his early years that one must turn to form a just estimation of his abilities, and in his finest works he takes his place beside Titian and Velazquez, Rembrandt and Holbein, amongst the greatest masters of portrait painting who have ever lived.

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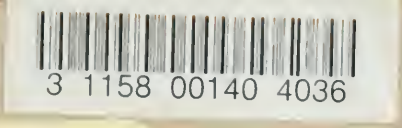

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